

Harmanjot Kaur Bhatti

PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, RIMT University,

Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab, India.

bhattihrmn0046@gmail.com

Enfranchisement of Incarcerated self: A Comparative Study of Dalip Kaur Tiwana's
Twilight and Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence

Abstract: Caught in the snare of traditional patriarchal values, women are making desperate efforts for their liberation. In the Patriarchal social set up, women are discriminated and face bias at various different levels and are incarcerated and oppressed by Patriarchy. As only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches, the women writers have remarkably captured the experiences of women in their works- their oppression, exploitation and their quest for a liberated self.

This research paper aims at the comparative study of the Indian English novelist Shashi Deshpande's novel That Long Silence and the Punjabi novelist of renown- Dalip Kaur Tiwana's novella Twilight (Translation of Godhuli) from a feminist perspective and their treatment of the theme of enfranchisement of the incarcerated 'self' from the exploits of patriarchy.

Keywords: consciousness, enfranchisement, feminist, oppression, patriarchy, self.

1. Introduction: Although Feminism is Western in its origin and initiated by the western women, in India, the movement was instigated by men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who fought for the rights of women in India. Resistance to patriarchy and demand for the rights equal to men in the society remains the essence of the movement

even today. With thrive of the movement; the Indian writers as well began to depict their feminist concerns in their works- highlighting the overwhelming Patriarchy dominating, exploiting and enslaving the 'self' of women. As Jasbir Jain writes in "Reading Women's writing":

...women's writing is the literature of silence. Its meaning lies enclosed and camouflaged. It is also the literature of silence for it seeks to express that which has been submerged and suppressed. Writing in itself, has always been an act of courage.
(Jain, 8)

Women's writings, essentially, question and challenge patriarchy and its constructs which act as vanquishing factors in their growth and development. They present the world from a woman's perspective- a perspective which had long been ignored by the male writers and had presented women from their own perspective. The prime focus of the women writers lie on "women's lives and experiences" (Prakash, 33) and breaking the stereotypical and mythological image of women, which is a patriarchal construct.

Both Dalip Kaur Tiwana and Shashi Deshpande are the writers who put the woman question under limelight in their works. Dalip Kaur Tiwana in her novella *Twilight* (originally *Godhuli*, translated by Narinderjit Kaur and Jai Rattan) depicts the psychological dilemma of the female protagonist- she is pondering over the idea to step out of her marriage after her husband's suspicion about her extra-marital affair but finally submits herself to the situation whereas in *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande presents the story of a modern, educated, middle-class woman who takes up the task of writing, adopts it as her profession and becomes famous but dwarfs her creative genius because of her obligations as a wife.

2. Constrained 'self' and Patriarchy: Both the writers portray the hampered 'self' of women in the patriarchal milieu. The socio-cultural construct of gender fosters roles upon women, which leads to conflict and a tension emerges between the 'self' constructed by society and the actual self of woman free from the influence of patriarchy and tradition. As N. Sharada Iyer remarks in the article "Socialization and Gender Construction in Shashi Deshpande's Novels":

Socialization plays an important role in the construction of gender, and bares the link between social values and the paradigms of male domination. Socialization is a very powerful instrument; it has enormous influence in conditioning not only a girl's but also a boy's psyche since its influence begins in early childhood... In literature, one gets how a girl child is indoctrinated to withhold, conceal and suppress her real self. Myths that socialize and contain Indian women abound in ancient literature. A number of studies have analyzed them for gender discriminatory values. The overall picture one gathers from literature is subordination, exploitation, violence and oppression, trapped in patriarchal cultural values and paradigms. (Iyer, 42)

The girls are conditioned and socialized in a way that they internalize patriarchal cultural values and make them an essential part of their psyche as well as personality. In Tiwana's *Twilight*, the protagonist Harjit, a well-educated, working woman, has a genuine concern for her colleague Amrik as a human, but she fears that if she asks anybody in the office about him, what the person would think about her:

I want to go to your place and enquire how you are, but I don't go, because your family may ask who I am. Besides, I don't know how they'll read my expressions. (Tiwana, 6)

The above mentioned monologue gives a deep insight into her psyche where it is engrained that she is a 'woman' and Amrik is a 'man'. Later on, her concern is mistaken for an extra-marital affair by her husband, Rajinder, who forgets the years of companionship with his wife over a letter of concern written for a sick colleague:

Then what is your relation with him? Is there an affair going on?... You have been living a lie. I thought you were happy with your home, your husband, your life.... But if you had been happy with your home, your husband, your life, you would not have...outside...like this. (Tiwana, 9)

She feels so humiliated by that at a point of time, she thinks, "Is it a sin to be a woman" (Tiwana, 13). Harjit, an educated modern woman, is chided by her mother and instructed to go back to her husband's house from the working women's hostel where she had been staying with her friend, Sonal. The mother represents the traditional, orthodox patriarchal values, which force a woman to perform the actions unwillingly:

Woman is not worth a penny without a man. You must tolerate his wrath sometimes. Rather than get into an argument, no harm in keeping quiet.... You do one thing, leave your job.... You prefer a job over your home? (Tiwana, 24)

Harjit's mother is in complete contrast with Virginia Woolf who suggests a room of one's own and economic independence as the pillars of liberty for women. She thinks that a

woman can find fulfillment only in the domestic sphere and Harjit must apologize and return to Rajinder.

Honored with Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990 for the novel *That Long Silence*, Deshpande presents the hampering of woman's self in the novel. The moving tale of Jaya, the lady of the house, who submits herself to the household and family but blamed by her husband, Mohan, for the charges of corruption on Mohan, *That Long Silence* traces her journey from silence and subservience towards quest for self and identity.

Jaya is an introvert at the beginning, who thinks; "Self-revelation is a cruel process" (Deshpande, 1). She becomes an introvert and opts to remain silent after Mohan's blaming her for corruption charges on him, as Mohan believed it was Jaya and her children for whom he had been dishonest and corrupt. Though inspired by Kamat, her neighbor, she seems to be reluctant to begin her career as a writer because she believed, "My own career as a wife was in jeopardy" (Deshpande, 25). She had written a story after a few years of her marriage which was well accepted by her readers. The story was about a woman whose husband could not understand her and could establish the only connection with her through her body. Although the story was a success and brought Jaya fame, Mohan was dissatisfied as he believed that the readers would assume the story to be autobiographical and the man in the story would be taken as none other than Mohan himself. After realizing her "wifely duties", Jaya begins writing incognito, losing her readers, who now were unable to locate that anger and aggression in her stories which used to be there once earlier. Afterwards, she began writing about a fictional character Seeta and entitled her work as "Diaries of a Sane Housewife".

Deshpande also highlights the issue of changing the name of a woman at the time of her marriage as if she does not have an identity prior to it. "Jaya" in Hindi stands for "victory

or conquest” whereas in the novel, she is presented a submissive and feeble character. She is renamed as Suhasini after her marriage, which means “a loving, motherly, nurturing woman”:

And I was Jaya. But I had been Suhasini as well. I can see her now, Suhasini who was distinct from Jaya, a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtures her family. A woman who coped. (Deshpande, 16)

She sheds the unnecessary parts of her “self” in order to fit herself forcibly into the “mould of ideal womanhood” constructed by patriarchy, especially while writing consciously about what to write and what to avoid writing, which leads to overshadowing of her creative genius.

3. Strife for Laissez-aller: Tiwana’s Harjit makes a desperate attempt to step out of the institution of marriage. Disillusioned and in a fit of anger, she leaves her husband and walks into Sonal’s room in the hostel. Harjit strives for emancipation by walking out of the relationship, though for a short period of time. In the company of Sonal, she realizes that a woman should live her life on her own terms and conditions and that “Sonals are not born of mothers; they are born out of the bitter realities and oppressions of life...” (Tiwana, 71). Sonal is depicted as a free bird having many male friends, who is disliked by Harjit’s mother. But finally, the women around Harjit, like her traditional mother, act as the agents of patriarchy making her realize her ‘mistake’ of holding to her self-respect and not bearing “the wrath” of her husband for a wrong-doing, a sin which was never committed by her.

Deshpande in *Of Concerns, of Anxieties* write:

My writing comes out of the conflict between my idea of myself as a human being and the idea that society has of me as a woman.

All this makes my writing very clearly women's writing.

(Deshpande, 107)

Though Jaya tries to show her responsibilities towards herself and decides to give vent to her silence through her writings, it seems to be a revolt against her silence. She uses her writing as a tool to express her real 'self', she believes, "I am not afraid anymore. The panic has gone" (Deshpande, 191). The character with feminist consciousness- Jaya, towards the end of the novel, seems to be nervous and excruciating with the idea of this consciousness and "She gets worried about saving her marriage, even if it meant making compromises with her beliefs" (Saksena, 1)

4. Conclusion: Both Dalip Kaur Tiwana and Shashi Deshpande are remarkable at their portrayal of women and their issues in the patriarchal society; they raise the question of their redemption from the chains of patriarchy but the beauty lies in their treatment of the theme. Their protagonists, in the selected novels, are educated women, aware of what is happening to them but both of them giving up in the end. Both the writers seem to showcase the idea that women, despite being aware of their oppression and exploitation, at times, deliberately opt to resign as any form of assertion leads to their estrangement from their family and community.

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